

50 SHADES OF CAKE COMES TO NORTHEAST WELLNESS

By Jessie Cho



The Los Angeles County Department of Mental Health's (LACDMH) Northeast Wellness Center (NEWC) sponsored "50 Shades of Cake" on Saturday, June 14, 2014. The community-based fundraiser was held at Future Studio Gallery (5558 North Figueroa). Gallery owners Amy Inouye and Stuart Rapeport offered the venue where "depressed" cake goods and artwork were on display. In meetings with NEWC's Positive Visions group, the event was organized by clients and staff of NEWC. Artist Nancy Buchanan brought in local bakers and artists to participate. The Greyhound Bar and Grill (5570 North Figueroa) donated coffee and tea for the event.

The depressed cake concept was conceived in 2013 by Emma Cakehead in the UK to raise awareness about depression. Despite the name, the cakes are fresh and delicious. Nancy Buchanan provided a cake and beautiful prints of baked goods. Clients from NEWC displayed colorful artwork and other imaginative craftwork.

The event was a success and the turnout enthusiastic. The inventory of grey cakes nearly sold out by the end of the evening. In fact, all proceeds from "50 Shades of Cake" generously went to NEWC's Positive Visions program. The clients who offered up their arts and crafts also fared well. Each artist donated a percentage of their sales to Positive Visions as well. The bakers donated their artistic baked goods. Future Studio Gallery kindly provided the space, and the gallery owners worked with NEWC staff and Positive Visions to make the event a success, acting as a liaison to involve community members and also writing of the event in local papers.

Positive Visions is the client council at NEWC. The clients organize and implement events and fundraisers. The collected funds are used for clients' needs. Although supported by NEWC staff, the clients in Positive Visions are the ones who vote and make final decisions. They also support the NEWC's softball team and some of NEWC's art groups (providing supplies for art projects) as well as individual needs.

Each time a Depressed Cake Shop pops up, it brings awareness of mental health issues and takes on its own personality. Creative individuals, such as Nancy Buchanan in this Northeast Los Angeles event, put their own stamp on the concept as the movement spreads around the world (Canada, France, Pakistan, Malaysia, Belgium, Germany, India, Brazil, Norway and Sweden). It is awesome to think that a grey cake can break down social stigma, educate and empower people, and make friendships for life.